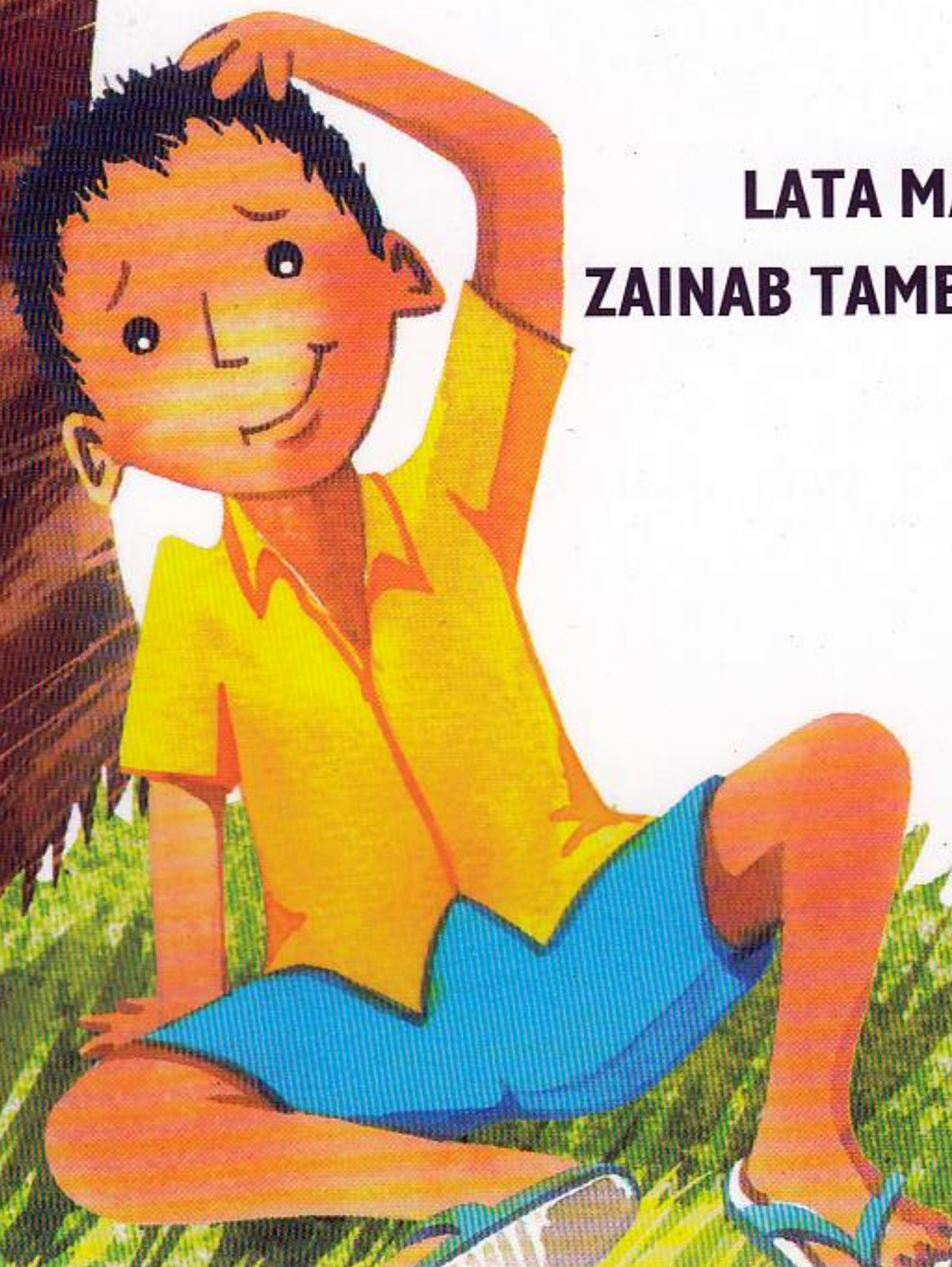




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LAXMAN'S QUESTIONS

LATA MANI
ZAINAB TAMBAWALLA



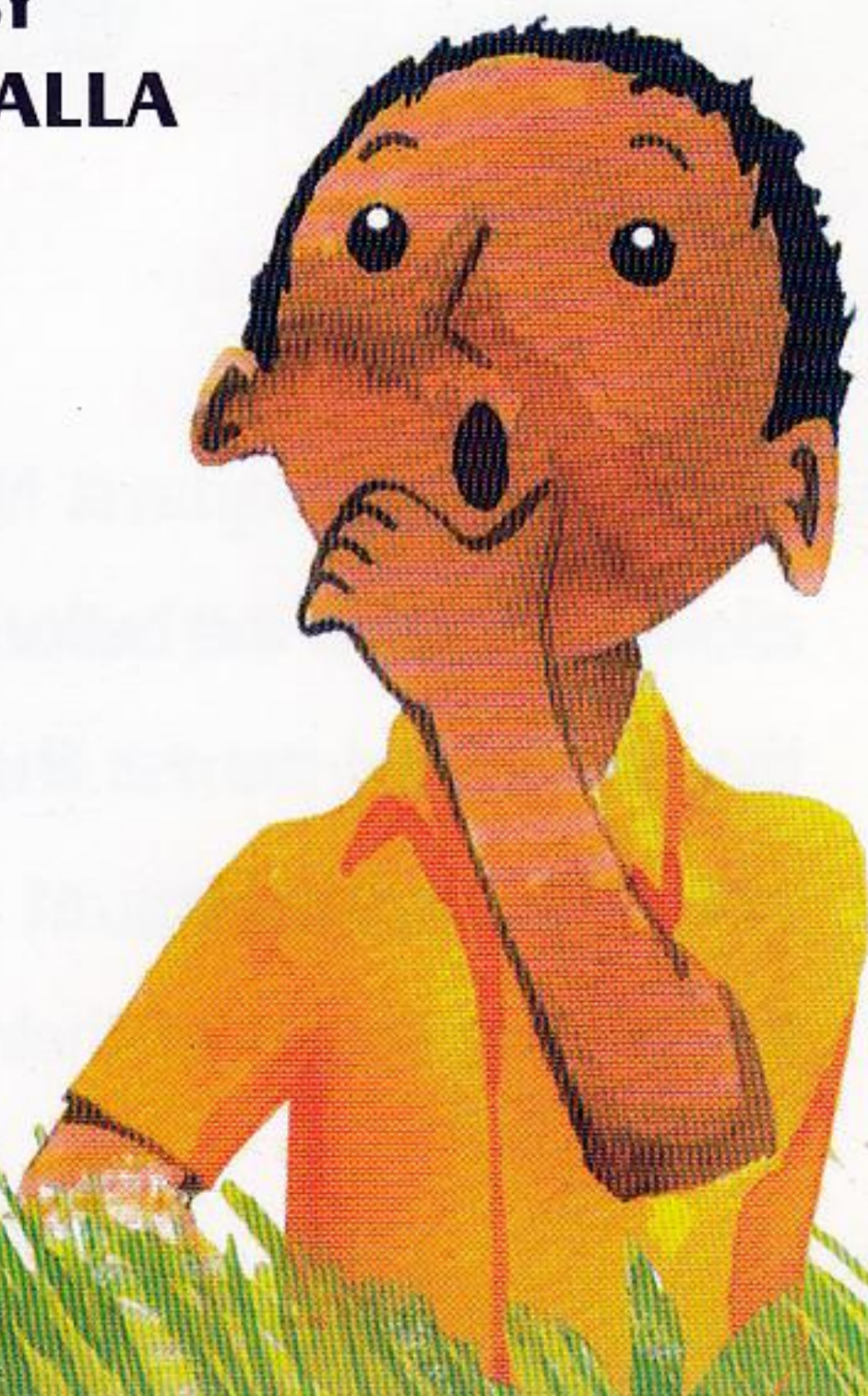
LEVEL 3



LAXMAN'S QUESTIONS

**WRITTEN BY
LATA MANI**

**ILLUSTRATED BY
ZAINAB TAMBAWALLA**





Laxman loved Sundays. Not only was there no school, but he was allowed to take the bullock cart to pick up grass. He loved racing the empty cart across the open fields to where the grass cutters worked. The thudding of the animals' hoofs on the dirt road and the tinkling sound of their bells thrilled him.



He looked forward to it all week long. The grass cutters had usually been at work since six o'clock and by the time he arrived, several loads were ready to be transported. Like the men who cut grass, Laxman had awoken early. It was his grandmother's job to make sure he did.





Pachamma would softly call out his name. Then she would tug at the blanket that had usually wound itself around him since he rolled about in his sleep. If he still did not stir, she would tickle him. That always did the trick. Laxman hated being tickled!

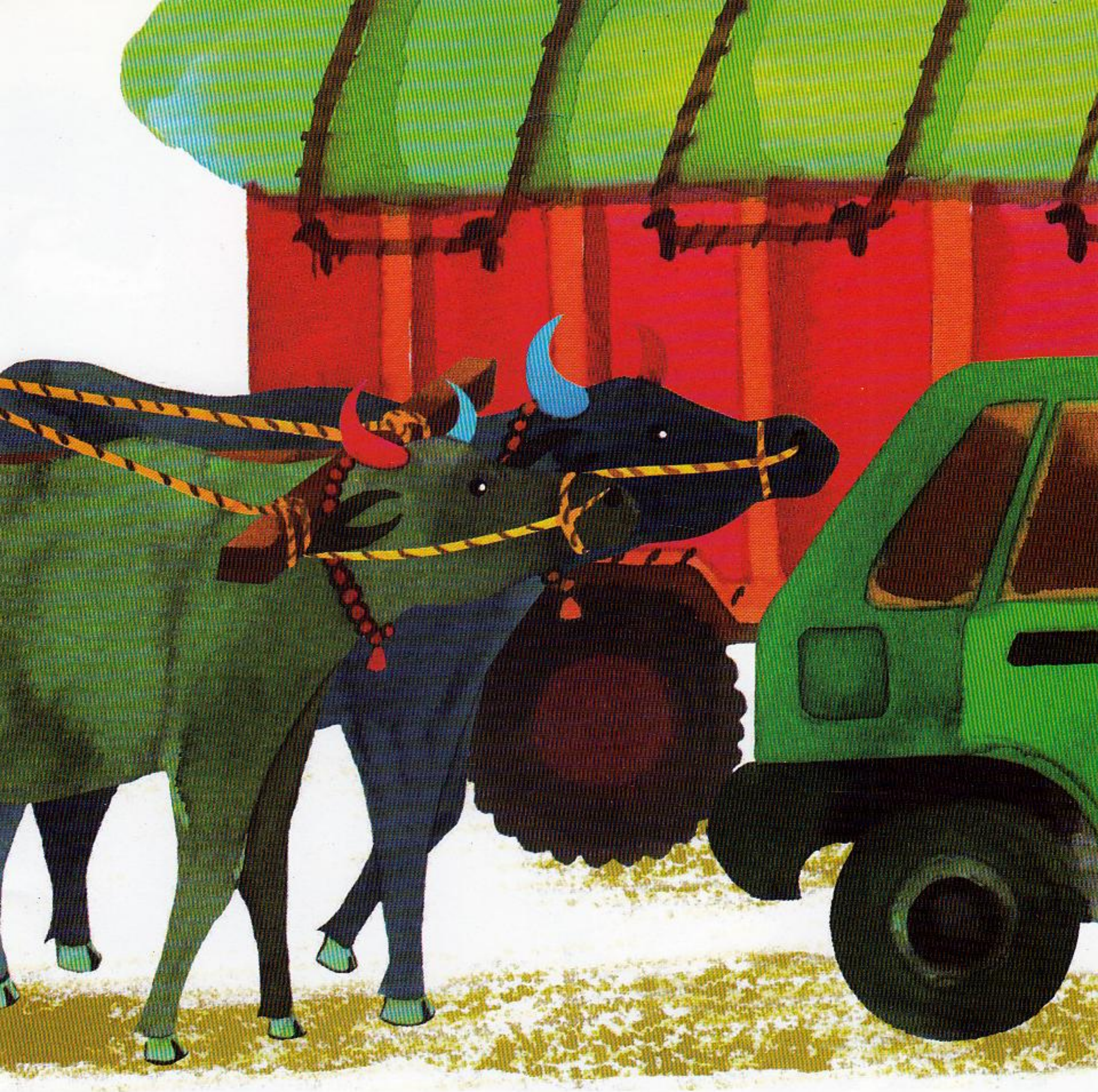


After Laxman got himself ready, he would feed the bullocks. They did not need to be bathed; that was done in the late afternoon at the end of their workday. As they set off he would pray to God to protect all three of them.



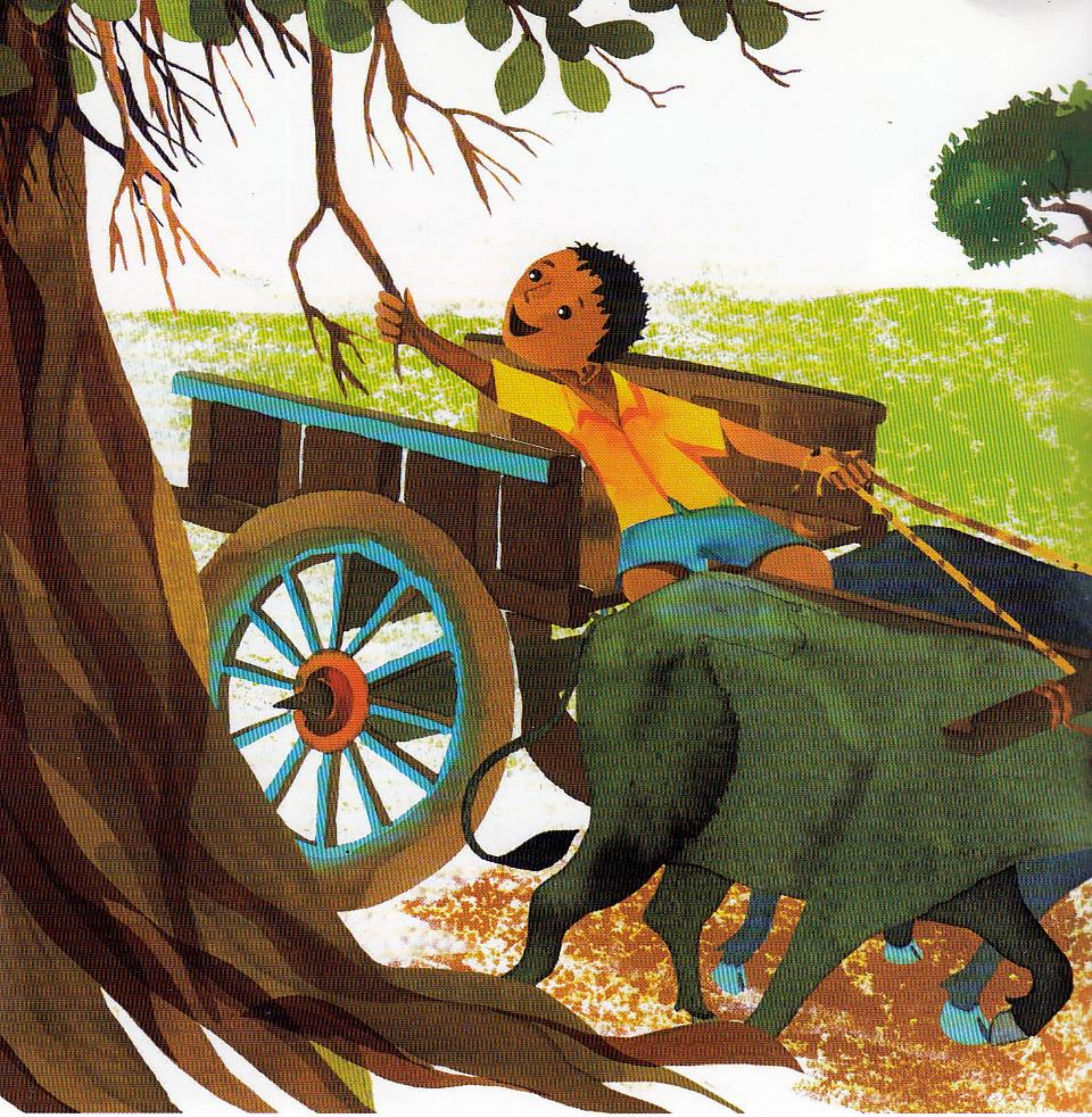


The traffic on the three-kilometre stretch to the fields had grown. There were now so many cars, two-wheelers and trucks on the road that he sometimes felt a little worried. Sundays were better than other days. Still, it was not as it had been before the city had expanded into the surrounding villages. The other vehicles often seemed to be in a hurry.



What was worse, they would cut in front of him and then abruptly stop. They never seemed to realize that a bullock cart had no brakes! Laxman needed time to bring his cart to a halt. Besides, all this weaving in and out by the other vehicles made the animals unhappy. As a result, the ride to the fields had become something of a challenge.





Laxman felt sorry about this because he used to enjoy the journey. He would say hullo to all his favourite trees. The gulmohar on Sarjapura Road, the banyan opposite the Ganesha temple and the jacaranda at the corner where he turned toward the fields.



ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय
गरवारे वासुदेवाय
ॐ

Laxman felt that the trees were just as eager to see him as he was to see them. And each time he called out a greeting, the buffaloes, Vadivel and Yezhumalai, would swish their tails as if they were joining in!

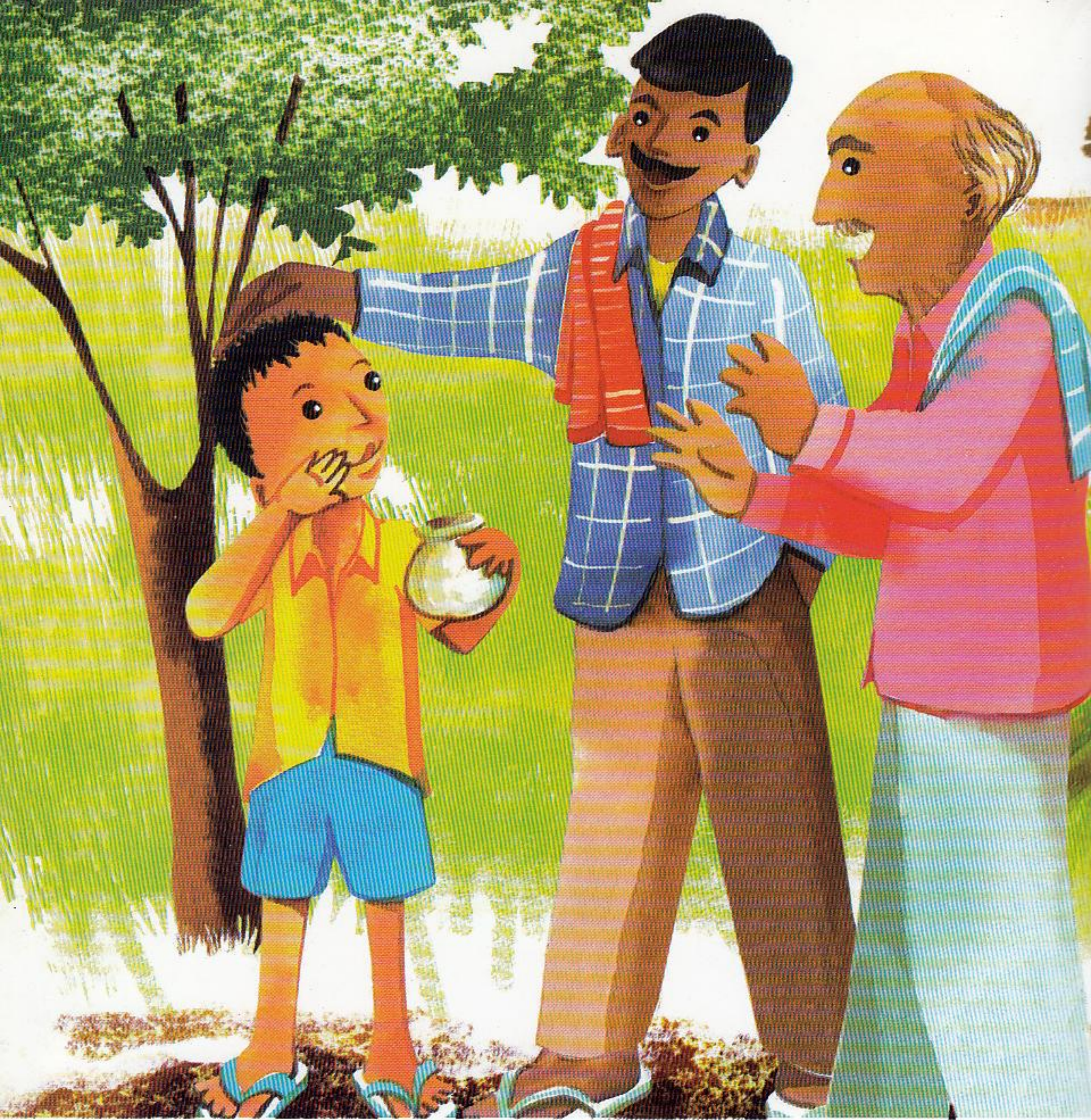


The birds were another attraction for Laxman. Would the koel be calling out as he rounded the corner toward the nursery, or would he have missed its morning serenade? And what about the coucal with its deep 'koo koo koo' sound?

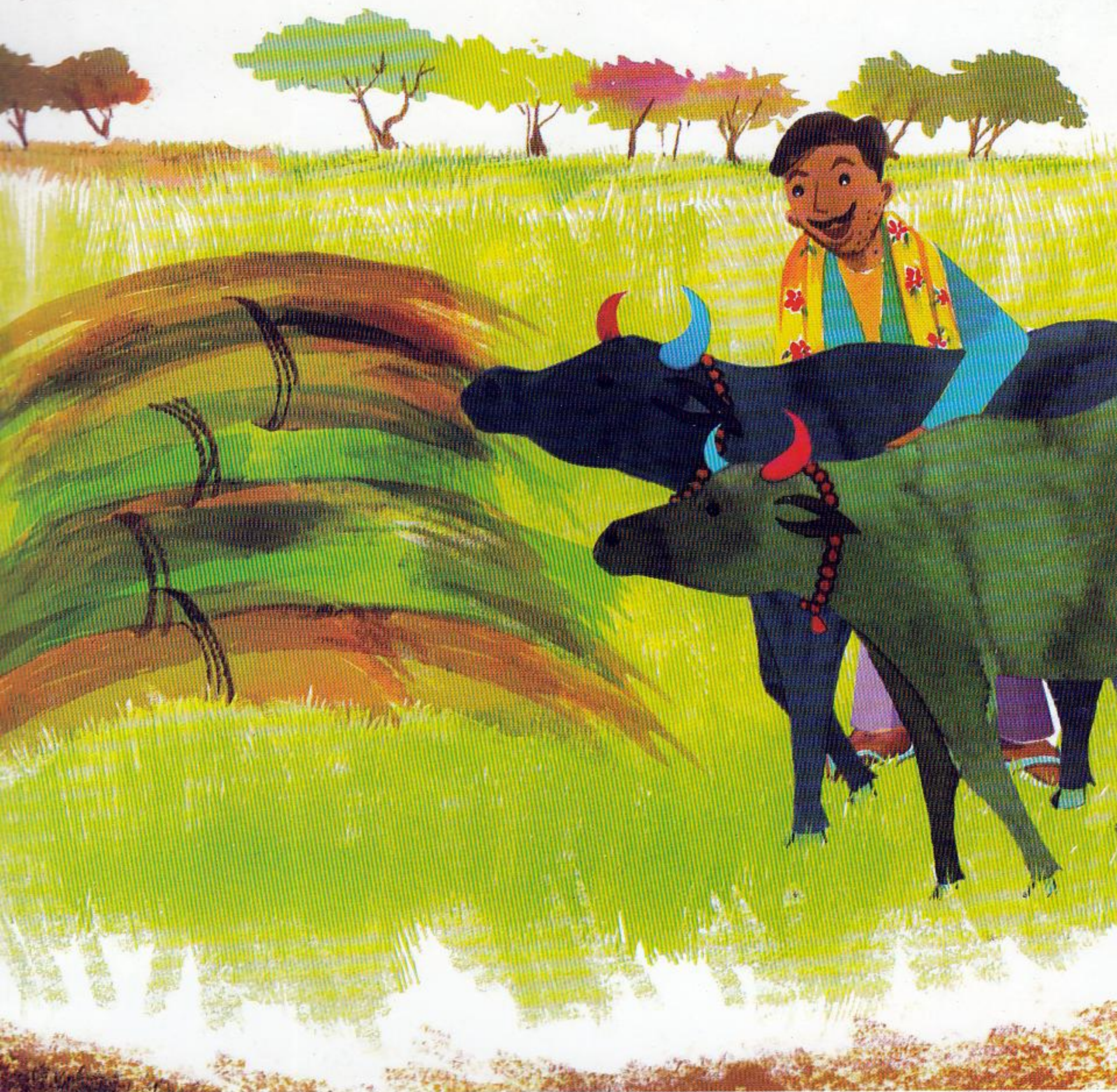


And how many pigeons would be flying over the temple as the pujari sounded the bells? Every Sunday was different. One could never know what was going to happen. It was all so exciting.





When Laxman pulled up to where the grass cutters were working, he was received in style. The men would stop their work to talk to him and stroke the animals. His uncle Krishna was one of them.



He always brought some home-made kanji for Laxman to drink. He would drink it in one long gulp and then find a tree under which to sit. Meanwhile, the men would begin piling grass onto his cart.





The time under the tree was special to Laxman. Since he was not responsible for anyone or anything, he could safely daydream. So many questions were constantly arriving in his mind, questions he never had time to think about.



Why did the sight of mynas flying give him such happiness?
Was it because the mynas were happy? Or did it have
something to do with the way they flapped their wings – the curve
or rhythm?





Laxman had noticed that he had different reactions to different birds. Mynas in flight made him joyful. Kites gliding made him feel peaceful.

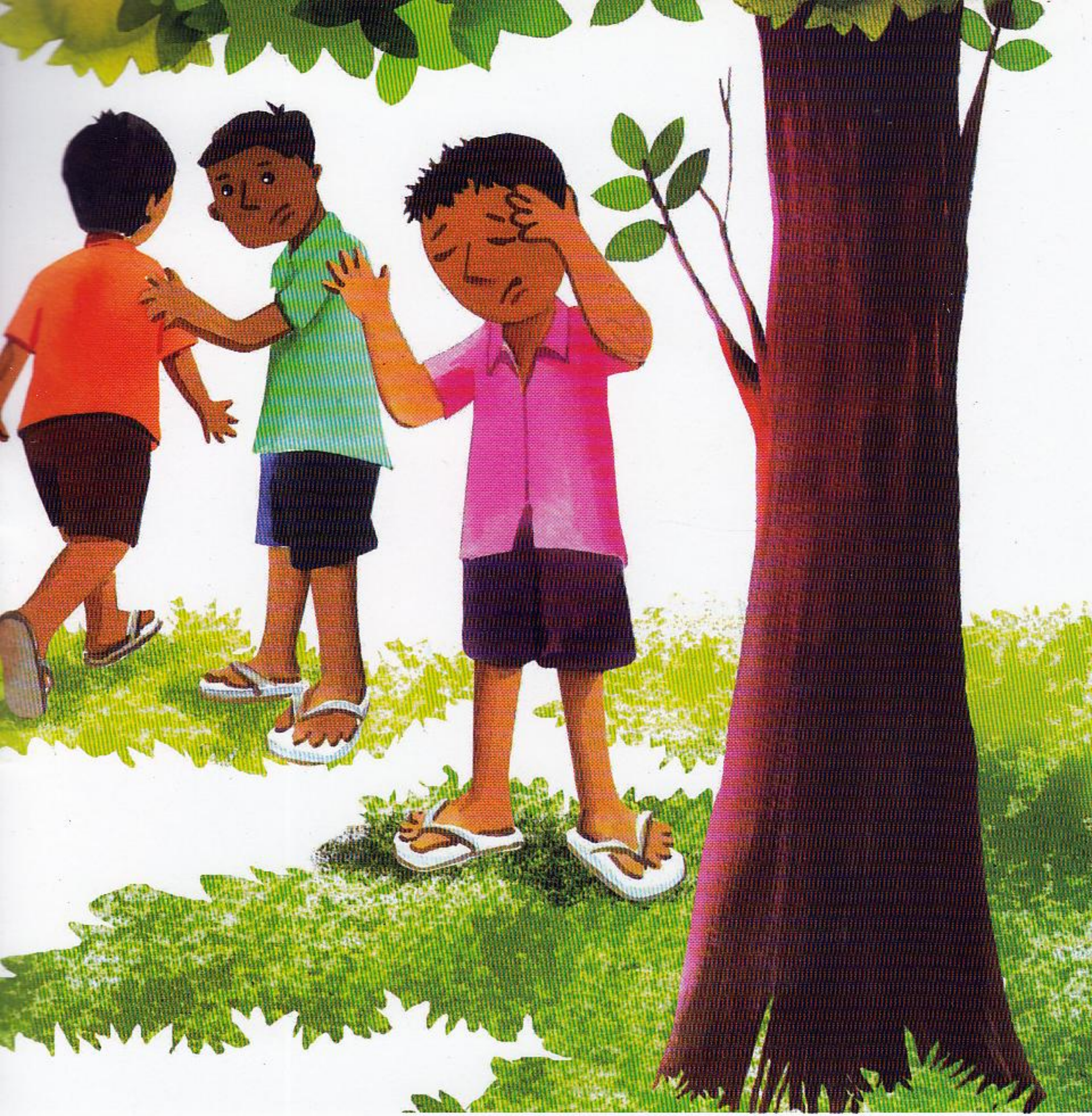


Egrets rising into the air and tucking their legs beneath them filled him with awe. Why? Was it something about their size or their speed or the way they moved? Or was it him? He was not sure.





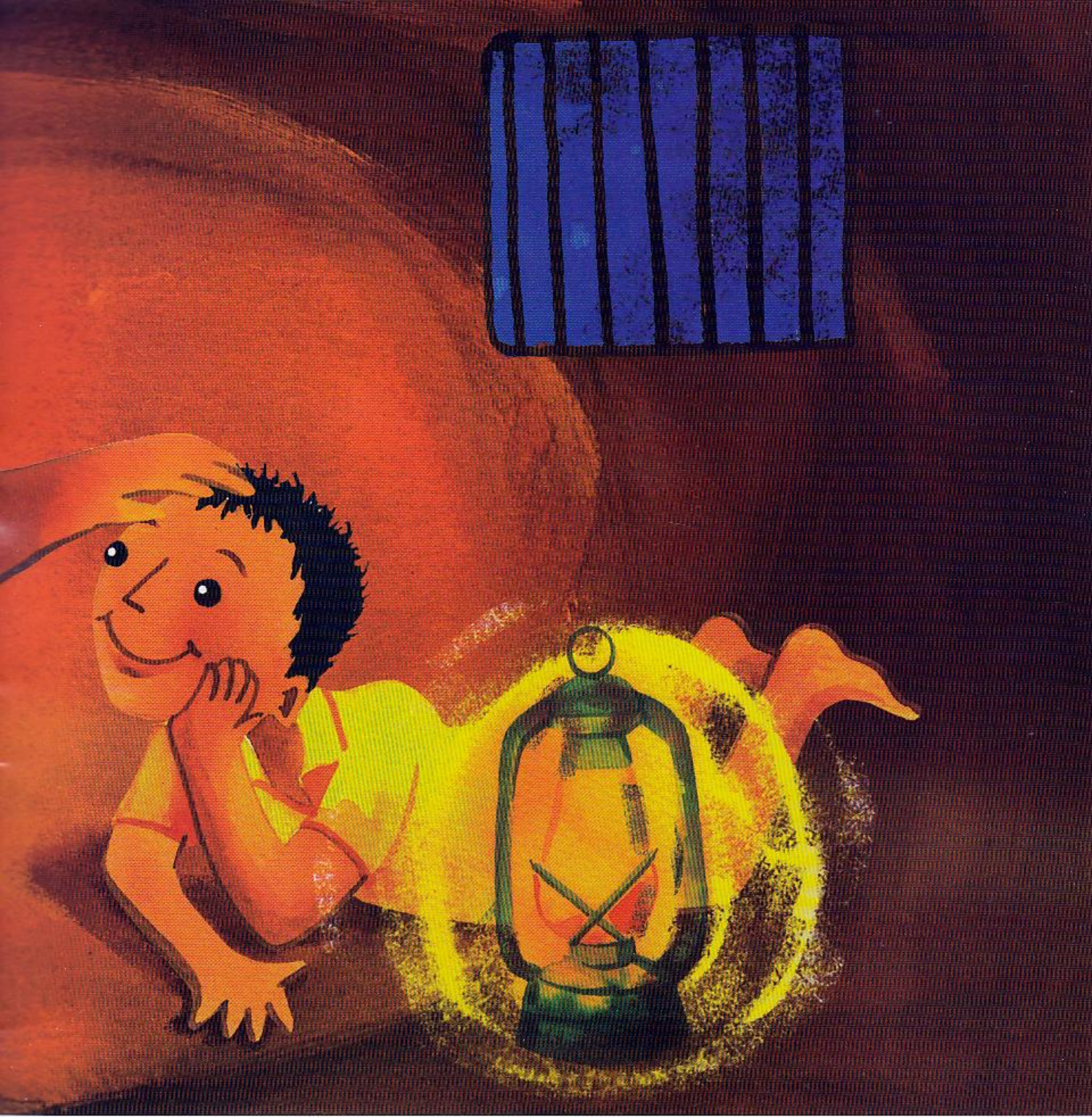
Laxman had tried to talk to his friends about all this but they thought he was silly. They could not understand why these questions were important to him. Laxman did not mind that his friends were not interested. He just wished he could talk to the birds and get their opinion. Laxman was certain that there was a time



when human beings had been able to talk to plants, trees, birds, animals and understand their language. He could not say why he knew this, but he just did. After all, he felt strongly that when he waved to the trees, they waved back. But he could not prove it and so he kept his thoughts mainly to himself.



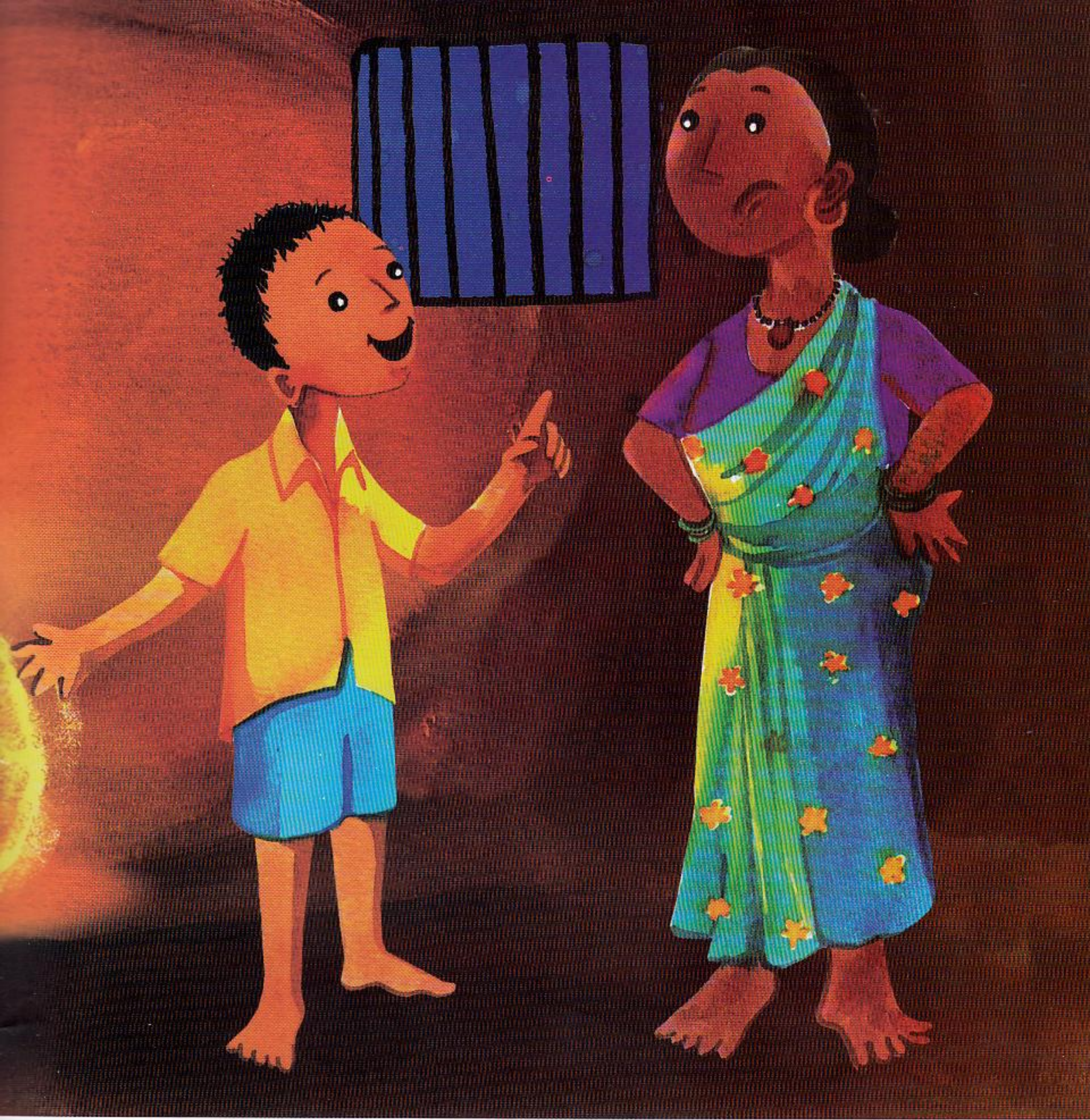
The one person to whom Laxman told everything was his grandmother. Pachamma loved hearing what was on his mind. She called Laxman 'my little sage'. "Don't worry that others do not understand or care," she would say.



“The world is full of mystery. It would be a waste if we did not notice things or think about them!” Pachamma’s confidence in Laxman set him free to wonder about everything that occurred to him.

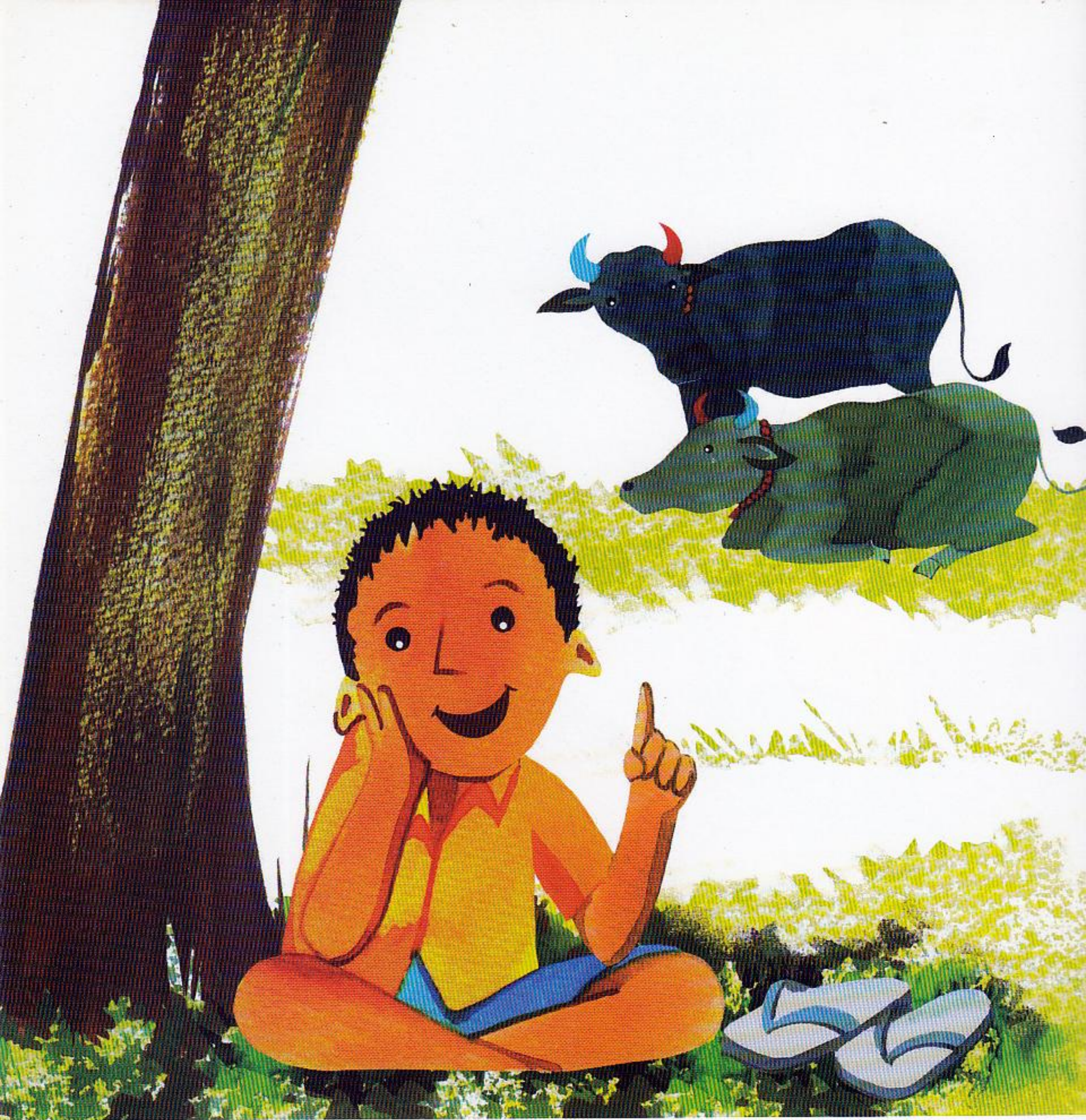


Laxman's mother Valli pretended she did not approve. "Tell me," she would ask looking straight into his eyes, "what is the point of asking questions for which neither you nor anyone you know has answers?" Laxman would respond with his grandmother's words, "Pachamma says questions are as important as answers."



Valli would roll her eyes as though she disagreed.

Laxman was not discouraged by this. He knew that his mother was secretly proud of him. He had overheard her telling his father once, “I don’t know where he gets his questions from... but they certainly make my life interesting. What a clever son we have!”



When Laxman heard this he beamed. He loved his mother and she had given him permission to be curious. And if ever Laxman felt disheartened that so many of his questions remained unanswered, he would say to himself, “Questions are as important as answers.” And he would imagine Vadivel and Yezhumalai swishing their tails in agreement.

Laxman's head was full of questions:
why did seeing a bird fly make him
happy? Did the birds who saw him
feel just as happy? Read this book to
see if you have such questions too.

Learning to read – level by level. This is a Level 3 book.

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